

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**Thursday 7 September 2006**

***Petition numbers not surprising.***

The Auckland regional District Health Boards (ARDHBs) are neither surprised nor swayed by a petition that was presented this morning on the awarding of the community laboratory contract to a new provider.

"We are not surprised by the number of people who have signed the petition, given the level of misleading and incorrect information that has been, and continues to be, circulated and that the driving force behind the petition is DML which has lost the contract," says ADHB Chairman Wayne Brown.

"DML takes test samples from close to 40,000 people every week and has been pushing this petition for eight weeks."

The ADHB accepted the delivery of the DML petition today at a committee meeting which did not have the power to debate it.

"We had offered DML the opportunity to present at a more appropriate forum given this is a regional contract, with the decision made by the three boards. However DML did not respond to the offer of presenting it at a regional meeting next week.

Mr Brown says the ARDHBs are now focused on the implementation of the new contract and looking forward to planning on where the \$15 million per annum savings can be reinvested into other areas of health.

"The decision to change providers still stands and will not be revisited. It was not made lightly and the ARDHBs are cognisant of the need for the new service provider to deliver a quality service during agreed timeframes," says Mr Brown.

The new contract will have clear performance and quality measures which do not exist in the existing contract.

To date, Labtests Auckland is ahead of its own implementation plan.

"We are satisfied on progress to date, the focus of which has been engagement with the DHB laboratories, building and facilities, planning for stakeholder engagement, and recruitment," says Mr Brown.

Mr Brown says he understands how staff and some members of the public may feel about the change of provider, but the same service specifications apply to the new contract with Labtests Auckland.

"Change is always difficult for some people, but we can assure the region that this was a decision founded on providing a quality laboratory service and improving the health of the population."

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